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# LABOUR ORGANISER

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# THE LABOUR ORGANISER

EDITOR: A. L. WILLIAMS

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## Televising Elections

ACCORDING to *The Times*, the next General Election is to be televised in a big way. The paper's political correspondent, who made the announcement, stated that both the Conservative Party and the Labour Party would have preferred to continue the arrangement which existed at the last General Election, but the B.B.C. and the I.T.A. have forced the pace. He admits that risks are involved in the proposed changes, but appears to think that these can be avoided by a gentleman's agreement by the political parties.

The chief risk is that of a possible breach of Section 63 of the Representation of the People Act, and that cannot be ignored whatever agreement the parties may make. The implications of the section in the case of televising elections are by no means certain, and the law is interpreted by the courts. Cases to decide whether the law has been infringed or not can be brought to trial both by the law enforcement authorities and private citizens. Obviously, the political parties cannot rush into arrangements which a judge may decide are illegal.

★

That aspect of the matter is one for the lawyers. Labour organisers will be concerned with the effect of television on their own functions. Will wide television coverage make unnecessary the canvassing, the publicity, the meetings, the calling-up on polling day and all

the other activities which have been regarded as essential to any well-run election campaign? A survey of the by-elections does suggest that it will.

At Rochdale, where the television ballyhoo started, there was a heavy poll, and the Liberal candidate, who was a television personality, secured a high vote. But Rochdale always has a heavy poll and it is one of the few places left where the Liberals are strongly represented on the local council. The situation of the cotton textile industry and the lead against the Government given by the employers clearly influenced electors to transfer their support from the Tory to the Liberal. Despite all this, Labour won the seat, because there was a good, orthodox campaign, and Labour supporters were identified and brought out to vote.

Both the B.B.C. and the I.T.V. were in at Weston, and there was a heavy poll there too. But at Wigan, there was no television; presumably because there was no Liberal candidate! Despite this, the vote was high, and the Labour share increased by over 6 per cent. The B.B.C. televised Ealing South, but the poll was much lower than at Wigan, Weston and Rochdale. The Argyll vote was up slightly on the General Election, though there was only a sound broadcast.

It is pretty certain that televising by-elections does increase interest, but it is doubtful if it causes any elector to vote contrary to his previous intentions. What it does seem to do is to strengthen the elector's convictions, which makes it easier to get him to vote, but there is still need for the political parties to identify their supporters and to ensure that they do vote.

*In this article, Len Sims outlines the provisions of the new Act which amends the procedure of Parliamentary redistribution*

# No Redistribution till 1964

THE March issue of the *Labour Organiser* outlined the provisions of a Bill that had just been published to amend the House of Commons (Redistribution of Seats) Act, 1949. Since then the Bill has passed through both Houses of Parliament and has received Royal Assent.

The purpose of the new Act—The House of Commons (Redistribution of Seats) Act, 1958—is to try and remove some of the anomalies found to exist in the 1949 Act, especially in relation to England. It will be remembered that considerable dissatisfaction was expressed, both in the House and in the constituencies, at the time of the last review.

This dissatisfaction was fairly consistent from the time the Commissions started publishing their proposed recommendations, right through to the time when Orders in Council put the recommendations into effect.

The main anomalies were as follows:

1. *The period within which general reviews were to take place.*
2. *The using of an England quota when the Act laid down a Great Britain quota.*
3. *The English Commission's method of allocating seats according to county areas.*
4. *The failure of the Commission to hold sufficient inquiries, and the failure to publish their revised recommendations.*
5. *The composition of the Commissions themselves.*

There were other matters, such as the disparity between the value of a vote in England as against its value in Scotland and Wales, and the difference between the electorates of county constituencies and those of boroughs.

During the passage of the Bill it was suggested that there should be a six months' standstill before the Orders came into force. The purpose of this

waiting period was to enable constituency political organisations to re-form themselves within the new boundaries.

It will be remembered that, following the 1954 Report, some Orders did not complete their passage through the House until the end of January, 1955, and the General Election took place in May. It will also be remembered that the whole series of local government elections were fought during the intervening period.

## Turned Down

This, and the other suggestions which would have improved the Bill, were turned down by the Government.

So much for the background. Now for the provisions of the new Act. Although the Parliamentary Labour Party tried to obtain further safeguards, especially regarding interim reports, the main features of the new Act were accepted by it.

The first Section deals with the constitution of the Boundary Commissions. The Commissions for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are to remain on a permanent basis as before, but their composition is changed.

While the Speaker remains Chairman of each of the Commissions (nominal chairman in effect), a judge will be appointed to each Commission as Deputy-Chairman. The nominees of the two Ministries will remain, but the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages and the Director General of Ordnance Survey are no longer full members of the Commission, but will be assessors.

The second Section amends the period within which general reviews are to take place. In future, the period will be not less than 10 years from the date of the Commission's last report,

nor more than 15 years. This means, in effect, that the next general review will not take place before November, 1964, but there must be one before November, 1969.

This Section goes on to make a provision whereby the Commission, while trying to give full effect to the existing rules regarding the alteration of constituency boundaries, can take into account any inconvenience that might arise from such changes.

One assumes, therefore, that local and community interest, geographical consideration, etc., will play a larger part in the deliberations of the Commissions than was the case in 1954. It will also avoid, we hope, such things as keeping county boundaries intact while ignoring many county borough and other local government boundaries.

Section 3 amends the electoral quota. In future there will be an electoral quota based on each of the four countries. Previously, the Commission for England, who were supposed to work on a quota for Great Britain (55,670 electors) did, in fact, use the English quota of 57,122. This has now been regularised.

### Changed Procedure

Section 4 deals with the procedure of the Commissions. In future, a Commission, on revising their proposed recommendations, must publish them in the same manner as their previous proposals, and then allow the same period of one month within which representations can be made.

The Section also lays down that, following the recommendations of a Commission to change a constituency, and where representations are received from an interested authority or a body of electors numbering 100 or more, the Commission shall not make the recommendation unless they hold a local inquiry.

This ensures that local authorities, political parties, and other bodies of opinion, will be able to make public their views on the proposed recommendations.

Section 5 deals with a small, but important point so far as Wales is concerned. The 1949 Act has been amended. The words 'The Administrative County of Monmouth' have been deleted and 'Monmouthshire' has been inserted. This means that, in future, the county borough of Newport will come within the scope of the Commission's recommendations for Wales.

### Monmouthshire Seats

Newport, a county borough, had an electorate of 71,989 in the 1955 General Election. The remaining constituencies within the county had electorates of less than 50,000.

One of the most important aspects of redistribution has not been satisfactorily dealt with—that of the scope of interim reports. The 1949 Act enables the Commission to make reports from time to time to amend any particular constituency or constituencies. In the past these interim reports have been confined to adjusting constituency boundaries to conform with local government changes.

It has been argued by the Government that the Commissions have abundant power under the 1949 Act to make more comprehensive recommendations. Yet, when the Opposition introduced amendments which would have ensured the Commissions acting when certain situations arose, the Government rejected them.

This is what the Home Secretary said on introducing the Bill on the 11th February:

... The Commissions already have power, under Section 2(3) of the 1949 Act, to make recommendations affecting individual constituencies between general reviews.

This is, in fact, a general power—I have checked on that point—but it is one, I remind the House, which hitherto has been used only to adjust constituency boundaries to local government boundaries, and we think rightly so.

A major alteration can hardly be made to one constituency in isola-

*continued on page 127*

# HOW LITTLE EATON WON A CUP

LITTLE EATON is a delightful little village in the marginal constituency of South East Derbyshire. At the last General Election there were few Party members in the village and no effective organisation.

Then things began to happen. Mrs. Baker, who is now the able secretary, was asked to assist in the General Election campaign. Afterwards she was asked by the agent whether there was any hope of the local party being re-formed. Mrs. Baker considered that the prospects were good and in September 1955 a party was formed, having 12 members.

With the help of a N.A.L.S.O. team, membership was increased to 42 by the end of that year. By the end of 1956 it had grown to 64 and by the end of 1957 to 75.

Encouraged by their success, and with the aid of the constituency party canvass team, this local party carried out a membership drive this year. Today, Little Eaton has a membership of 140, out of a total electorate of between eleven and twelve hundred.

## Not Paper

By no means is this a paper membership. It does not take Little Eaton all night to discuss the minutes of last month's meeting. It gets on with its business and finds time for educational, propaganda and social activities.

All the hard work has paid handsome electoral dividends. The Labour candidate who fought the rural district council seat did not win, but he polled handsomely, and Little Eaton is now represented on the Derbyshire County Council by a Labour member.

Mrs. Baker told us that now other branches are looking to Little Eaton for help. Her telephone bell rings and some comrade says 'We want the help of the Little Eaton Labour Party or else—'

Councillor Wass, Chairman of the Constituency Labour Party, decided to present a cup to be awarded annually to the Local Labour Party which had made the greatest progress during the year. It is not at all surprising that this year's annual meeting of the constituency party decided that the cup should be awarded to Little Eaton. Hence the victory celebration at which the Assistant National Agent handed over the cup on behalf of the

South East Derbyshire Constituency Labour Party.

It was a real family party in which the old, the middle aged, the young and the very young took part, and it was the young members who gave the lead all evening. We wonder sometimes if the art of self entertainment has been lost, but not at Little Eaton. They require no TV stars to entertain them. They entertain themselves and that probably accounts for the wholesome spirit which pervaded the gathering.

The Member of Parliament, Joe Champion, who expressed his great appreciation of the work and spirit of the Little Eaton Labour Party, joined in the fun, as did the constituency party officers, the leader of the Labour Group on the rural district council, county councillors and visitors from other parts of this marginal constituency.

If this fine work is continued throughout the constituency there can be no doubt that it will not be long before South East Derbyshire can no longer be regarded as a marginal seat, but is transferred into the 'safe seat' category.

## Lucky Strike at South Creak

SOUTH CREAKE is a small village in the King's Lynn constituency, Norfolk. Just over a year ago when I was taking up my duties as agent, the names of South Creake and its neighbour North Creake sounded like something out of a Western film, particularly as they are generally referred to as 'The Creakes'.

North Creake, with over 100 members, a good secretary and committee, was amazingly well organised, but there was no evidence that a party existed in South Creake, although our friends of the N.U.A.W. were well organised and as anxious as I was to form a local party.

Therefore, it was, with hope in our hearts, that the prospective candidate, chairman, treasurer, and yours truly met at the very small school in South Creake

where, according to our notices, everyone would be welcome.

At 8 o'clock, only four people were present, but we made a start, hoping that our audience would increase. Our chairman opened and explained why we were there, being followed by the candidate, treasurer, and myself. Four speakers, four in the audience. How disappointing! What a flop! Not in the least—three out of the four joined (the fourth joined later) and Mr. Tuddenham became secretary only until we could find another, because he had an injured hand which made it difficult for him to write.

### Sold Out

Later, in the local, I discovered him signing members up as fast as he could go. I left him 53 cards, hoping we would be lucky enough to make 50 members. You can imagine my surprise when two days later I received a short note, 'Sold out of cards—send more'.

A letter was received a few days afterwards from a person who was prepared to take on the secretary's job. Inside a month, mainly due to the effort of friend Tuddenham, we had 124 members, a first-rate committee and a full complement of officers. The electoral roll showed under 500 electors in the village, which meant that over 25 per cent had become members.

Almost a year has passed. During that time membership has increased to 130, several socials have been held, there has been a constant demand for speakers for meetings and we have gained a county seat in the electoral division of which South Creake is part.

### Village Parties

Large membership in village parties seems to be the exception rather than the rule, so I should point out that the four neighbouring villages of Burnham Market, North Creake, South Creake, and Syderstone have a joint membership of over 500 out of an electorate of less than 2,000. In each of these cases, credit must go to a grand team of workers that each village party can be proud of.

After a year in the constituency, I am proud to be associated with such fine people. No wonder we feel confident of winning the seat for Labour in the General Election.

*F. Aveyard*

## USE STANDARD EXPRESSIONS

I WAS most interested in the article by J. A. Clinch in the May issue of the *Labour Organiser* on 'A House Card System'.

Although I have not had the experience, by a very long way, that Mr. Clinch has had, I would heartily agree that a revision of the canvass card on the lines he has suggested is long overdue. I have used a house card system of sorts, but have come to the conclusion that individual cards, although more bulky, are really the simplest.

I was most attracted by the suggestion that 'Won't vote' and 'Won't say' be introduced as standard expressions into our code. I have frequently come across voters who state quite positively, and often violently, that they have no intention of telling anyone for whom they intend to vote. I feel it is only doing the Party harm to approach such people again on any future occasion.

One final suggestion that I might make, and this might be embodied in the instructions on the canvass card covers. That is that the expression 'doubtful' means that the voter is doubtful (and might respond to propaganda, or a visit by the Candidate), and not that the canvasser is doubtful as to the voter's views. Truly, 'won't say' is more often appropriate.

Yours faithfully,  
C. G. Trotman.

*Continued from page 125*

tion. It is almost bound to affect adjoining constituencies over a gradually widening radius, according to the ripples which are created, and there would be a real risk of a series of alterations which might go far to stultify the whole purpose of extending the intervals between general reviews.

We shall have to wait and see whether or not constituencies such as Hornchurch, which has an electorate of over 88,000 and is still rising, will be dealt with before the general review.

# SELLING THE PARTY'S POLICY

by W. T. Young

I WAS brought up in the belief that the purposes of a public meeting were threefold: to enable people to absorb the 'sincere milk of the word'; to obtain the biggest possible collection; and to sell literature.

Sometimes a fourth was added—to enrol new members. But I never witnessed any great success in this regard, for members who stick to the Party are made in other ways.

I want to write about the third of these purposes—the selling of Party literature. And I maintain that nothing like enough is done in this field of propaganda.

It is not that we haven't the literature to sell. The fact is that we have lost the art of selling, and the sooner we recover it the better for the health of the Party.

## How Then?

How then should we accomplish our task? And I speak of selling literature not only at public meetings but at conferences and any kind of meeting at which it is convenient to do so.

The first thing is to realise that literature selling is a special function which can only be fulfilled successfully by employing the right technique.

Now I have seen members in charge of this job who think it sufficient to display pamphlets and books flat on a table, and to stand behind it with a helper or two, with about as much hope of selling pamphlets as someone standing behind a shop counter waiting for customers who never come. Their attitude is casual, so they don't succeed.

Well, our special commodity cannot be sold in that way. There should, of course, always be a good display: a clean and tidy and up-to-date show is bright and attractive, but if we are going to sell we must be concerned about the spearhead of our job.

People will seldom come to us, so we

have to go to them. And at any gathering where it is really intended to sell literature we must bear this in mind.

I therefore believe that one should first of all choose the most suitable persons for the job, and it is not everybody's job. The man or woman who makes a good chairman or secretary doesn't necessarily make a good literature seller, so we must choose our sellers accordingly.

Literature should always be boosted from the platform and one of the best ways of doing this is to read one or two short extracts from a particular pamphlet.

This should be done clearly and attractively, for the impression must be made on the mind of the audience that we have something special to sell, which they must buy.

But sellers shouldn't wait for a boost, they should get busy inside the hall while the audience is assembling and, given a friendly and enterprising approach, it is surprising how much can be sold.

To obtain the best results it is advisable to push one or two pamphlets only. It is folly to start a competition in anyone's mind as to what he or she should buy. For very often a person in a divided frame of mind never buys anything at all. So focus attention on your special line and get on with the job expeditiously and enthusiastically.

## Major Display

The person who wants to buy additional pamphlets will find his or her way to the point of your major display and possibly purchase other pamphlets and books there.

I began this article with the belief that organisers and agents everywhere ought to do much more to sell our own particular publication—the *Labour Organiser*.

It is a good publication which answers considerably to our professional needs. Every issue contains useful information

about the legal and the technical and the administrative aspects of our profession, and none of us can afford to be without it.

Its contents are especially helpful to those earnest members of our ranks who have not yet made organising a professional career, but who nonetheless are continually anxious to serve the Party to the best of their ability.

Indeed, there is a large number of them in every region doing admirable secretarial and electioneering work and who would do even better if they knew more about some aspects of the work which they are called upon to do. So let us think about their needs as well as our own.

### Special Place

I therefore suggest that every agent should find a special place now and again on the Agenda for the General Committee meeting for boosting the *Labour Organiser*, and that he should tackle the job in the manner outlined above.

He could fasten the attention of his delegates on a special article of a particular issue, and I humbly suggest that he probably wouldn't fail if he started by reading and emphasising one or two points of this article!

There are, of course, other ways of tackling the job successfully. For instance, an Agent could introduce the *Labour Organiser* to the more studious-minded members who are interested in organisation, and if this were done periodically I shall venture to say sales would go up considerably before the end of this year.

If we are to win the next General Election, policy and organisation must be strongly and happily affianced. It is, therefore, our duty to emphasise the need and extol the value of the *Labour Organiser*.

party celebrated on his retirement from the temporary post at 81 years of age.

The thirty years of continuous service is typical of the man. He is not blessed with the gift of the gab, in fact, it is said among the local officers that he was the one person who trained the Russian leaders to say 'No', but no party has been better served by its finance officer.

### Bitter Experience

A convinced Socialist, who came into the movement as a consequence of bitter, industrial experience, including four years of victimisation by the South Yorkshire coal owners, he brought to the Party that trait of sound, common sense which gives importance to mundane things without losing sight of either ideals or major issues.

Many are the occasions I have seen him at work in a meeting. Circulars inviting the party to enter into substantial expenditure on 'will o' the wisp' ventures, or asking for donations to some passing heart-throb appeal, would be read and would produce an immediate motion in support. Discussion would follow indicating unanimous support, until Jim Cawthrow spoke. Oft time he simply said 'We cannot afford it'.

On other occasions he argued his case more fully by saying that such an expenditure would not in any way bring Socialism nearer and 'them that wants to chase these hares let them provide the brass'. Once he had spoken, the vote was taken and invariably Jim won.

### Astonishing Aptitude

On the other hand, he had an astonishing aptitude of surprising folks by giving his blessing to appeals which really mattered, such as ensuring that delegates or students were sent to conferences and schools, from which young members would be able to gain knowledge and so bring benefit to the party.

Such is Jim Cawthrow, and the presentation wallet, stuffed with notes will, I know, be treasured by him as a token of the esteem in which his colleagues hold him. But I guessed, as David Griffiths, M.P., was making the presentation, that he was more touched by the ounce of Bruno, which had been bought with the odd coppers of the subscription. Somehow it seemed more real. He could put that in his pipe and smoke it over his glass of bitter.

## Treasurer Retires

by J. T. ANSON

AT the 1927 Annual Meeting of the Rother Valley Constituency Labour Party it proved difficult to find someone to act as Treasurer and Financial Secretary. With a little persuasion, Jim Cawthrow was induced to take the post until a more suitable person could be found. On May 30th, 1958, the constituency

# LOOKING BACK

SEVEN years ago, as you may remember, I resolutely bowed myself out of the Party's employment, although not out of its service. My obeisance was, I confess, a clumsy one, as I never had the benefit of attendance at a school of deportment.

Within a month the Editor wrote asking me for another contribution on 'how it looked from the outside'.

I refused by return post.

This refusal gave me an impish pleasure. To be able to snap my fingers at the great ones to whom I had sought for so many years to be a good and faithful servant appealed to the school-kid who still dwells somewhere deep down within me.

Besides, I hadn't had time to look round. I had signalled my release from the shackles of office by going to Blackpool for a fortnight. To go to Blackpool except under compulsion was such eccentric behaviour that there was much significant shaking of heads among my candid friends.

## ***Misjudged Courtesy***

While in Blackpool I made a fraternal call on the agent there, but came away feeling that this was a misjudged courtesy.

Getting now, as Devon folk say, 'up along', it has occurred to me that the time has come to try to make amends for my failure to oblige the Editor in 1951. So now to say how things look from a relatively detached but not impartial position to an old warhorse whose nostrils have never, I declare to you, lost their sensitivity to the whiff of battle.

Almost immediately after I had been retired, the Party was defeated in a General Election. The concatenation of events must be regarded as purely accidental.

The reversion of the Parliamentary

Labour Party to the position of firstly His, and shortly afterwards Her, Majesty's Opposition must have come as a severe shock to the many jackasses I met between 1945 and 1950 who told me we should never again see a Tory Government in this country. Some of these selfsame folk have told me since that the Labour Government fell in 1951 because it wasn't 'Socialist enough'. Their logical processes I do not understand, but they appear to give them complete satisfaction.

## ***Embarrassing Assistance***

Put out of office by what must pass for the will of the electorate, it was natural for the Party to give a great deal of its attention during the past six years to the two main aspects of the task of recapturing the power to resume its advance towards the development of a socialist society, namely, the preparation of a five-year legislative programme on the one hand, and the strengthening of its election machinery and improvement of its public propaganda on the other. In these two distinct but associated tasks the volume of assistance we have had from outside the Party has been positively embarrassing.

If I now express some emphatic personal opinions, let the justification be that in fifty years of active electioneering and other general service in the ranks of the Party I think I have learnt some clear lessons. And the first of these is that in politics there is no such thing as gratitude.

If that is correct, it follows that little purpose can be served simply by reminding the electors of the massive achievements of Labour Government between 1945 and 1951. All that has passed into history, a subject devoid of interest to most folk. Moreover, a couple of millions or so of people who

# D AND FORWARD

oted Labour in 1945 will never vote Labour again because they are already dead, and it is a phenomenon familiar to all discerning committee-room clerks that if the dead vote at all, as they sometimes do, they vote Tory.

So, as practical politics must be concentrated on the present and the future, have welcomed the steady flow of responsible policy documents presented

BY

## Clem Jones

S.W. Regional Organiser for many years

in an orderly fashion to the wide membership of the Party and adopted by Conference.

I cannot, however, feel any great satisfaction with the amount of propaganda which the Party is doing to impress the content of these policy statements upon the minds of the masses of electors, over 30,000,000 of them; nor with the ways in which that propaganda is done or, more often, left undone.

The two chief vehicles of propaganda are the written word and the spoken word, and I shall not waste space on the futile controversy, often vigorously waged, as to which of the two is the more effective. Both are needed.

Much of the excellently-produced printed matter issued by Party Headquarters is inevitably prepared for those who are more or less serious political students; but there is a great deal also of a popular character, suitable for the lighter reader, which ought to have ten times the circulation it has.

Is there a local party in the land which has reached saturation point — or anywhere near it — in the sale and distribution of this invaluable material?

Again, why have so many of our parties

apparently accepted the view, put forward all the more dogmatically because no evidence is produced in support of it, that the public meeting is 'out-dated'? It constantly recurs from all sorts of pundits, some of them far from notable for reliability.

The most recent ebullition was in the *Daily Mirror* a week or two ago, when the meeting in the village hall was scornfully dismissed as valueless, and the well-written newspaper and television proclaimed as the modern technique for winning elections.

What? Dare we rely on banner headlines, on primped-up television stars, on surges of emotion (or hysteria), on rabble-rousing cries on the air or in the multi-million newspapers, to do the serious work of democratic government?

Not many years ago you could pick up your *Daily Herald* on a Monday morning and find half a page or more devoted to brief reports of meetings addressed by the leading lights or lesser lights of the Party all over the country. The Labour Party was gaining rapidly in membership and public support during that period.

And the second lesson that the long years of going about the country and up and down in it have taught me is that one cannot exaggerate the importance of the unmelodramatic and unceasing chore of sound organisation.

### Poor Organisation

Of course, the finest of organisation cannot of itself win an election, but that's no reason for not trying to build it up. Poor organisation has lost many a contest and, alas, is likely to lose many more yet. And after all, working in a good election machine, although not so exciting, is healthier than the kind of electioneering that appears to be going on in Lebanon.

When nowadays I meet, as sometimes I do, a keen Party worker excited over discovering the 'Reading' system I smile amiably and encouragingly, and leave him still believing that there is something new under the sun. But I saw part of it working in Frome over twenty years ago, and another part of it operated in Devonport

by a millwright nearly thirty years ago. I stand aside in the battle of the systems; any *system* is better than none.

So to all agents, secretaries and active workers of all sorts and conditions, I would say, get on with the card-indexing, the marking of the register, the training of more and more men and women (and especially of young men and young women) in the manifold indoor and outdoor tasks of good electioneering. The dividends are sure to accrue.

### Young People

Speaking of the young people, one of the pleasures granted to me in these days has been an invitation to share two or three times in the adjudications in the National Youth Speaking Contest. I had it in the Southern Semi-Final a couple of months ago.

Two or three weeks afterwards I listened on the radio to the final of an inter-university contest. After hearing it I concluded that we have nothing to be ashamed of in the prowess of our own lads and girls, some of whom hadn't been even to comprehensive schools.

Before going back to bed perhaps I may be allowed to send greetings hereby to the countless old colleagues and friends in the Party who have enriched my life with their good company in our struggles for a great Cause.

When I came into the Movement it was a cloud on the horizon no bigger than a man's hand. Today it is a great political engine of potential unlimited power, and if it creaks and scrapes and misfires occasionally we can still put into it the lubricant of socialist faith to make it work.

NOTE TO MR. EDITOR. Please reserve space as I hope to write you some more in seven years' time.

## Five Lost Minutes

EVERYONE is familiar with the story that tells of the fate that befell a king through the want of a nail in a shoe of his horse. This story tells of the fate that befell a Labour council because five minutes were lost.

Following the recent local government elections, a council—a rural district council—consists of 19 Labour members

and 19 Independents. Under such circumstances the casting vote of the chairman is vital.

The council assembled for its annual meeting. The business began with 19 Independents and 18 Labour members, the Labour Chairman presiding. Now Section 33 (2) of the Local Government Act, 1933, lays down that the election of the chairman shall be the first business transacted at the annual meeting. This being so, the Independent nominee was elected by a majority of one.

The second item on the agenda was the election of vice-chairman, and it was at this stage the nineteenth Labour councillor took his seat—and cast his vote. The voting, of course, resulted in a tie of 19-all and the newly-elected chairman exercised his right to a casting vote in favour of the Independent.

And so control was lost after 14 years.

The late-comer suggested that the annual meeting had commenced before the appointed time. To supplement his point he drew attention to the clock in the ancient clock tower—only to be told that the clock was five minutes slow!

To make matters worse, it appears that the late-comer, on leaving home, found he was early for the meeting and popped into the public reading room to while away the time—only to find that as a result he had lost his bus!

## CANDIDATES

THE following were endorsed as prospective Parliamentary Candidates by the National Executive Committee recently :

Bedford	...	Mr. M. A. Foley
Mid-		
Bedfordshire	...	Mr. B. E. Magee
St. Helens	...	Mr. L. Spriggs
Wigan	...	Mr. E. A. Fitch
Wembley North	...	Mr. R. M. Lewis
Burton	...	Mr. E. McGarry
South		
Worcestershire	...	Mr. D. Young
Richmond	...	Mrs. M. McMillan
Scarborough		
and Whitby	...	Mr. G. Barnett
Caithness and		
Sutherland	...	Mr. R. King Murray

# UNITED LABOUR WINS 40 SEATS

by S. E. Barker

KIRK HARDIE presided over the tenth Annual Conference of the Labour Party, held at Newport, in February, 1910. There was much rejoicing over the results of the General Election which had taken place the previous month. For the first time in its history, the Labour candidates went into a General Election under one banner. Every official miners' candidate signed the Party Constitution.

Seventy-eight Labour candidates entered the campaign, as against 50 in 1906. Forty were victorious, as against 9 in the previous General Election, but Labour did not do so well in three-cornered fights as it had done in 1906.

The total votes cast were 1,378,656, out of which Labour candidates polled 505,690, an increase of 183,506 since the previous General Election.

Despite rejoicing, the National Executive Committee struck a note of warning. Its report contended that one of the lessons to be learnt from the General Election was that there was no point in placing a candidate in the field unless he was supported by good organisation.

## Vise Warning

It was not long before the wisdom of that warning was to be proved. After the failure of the conference on the House of Lords, the Liberal Government decided to go to the country. With very little warning, Labour found itself in the midst of a General Election. The Parliament elected in January came to an end in December.

The Party was hampered by financial difficulties created by the Osborne Judgment, and the old register did not help. Weak organisation had not been improved and the penalty for such neglect was the loss of several seats. St. Helens, Wigan and Newton were quoted as examples. Some candidates were held respon-

sible for a few of the unsatisfactory results. The report contended that the Constitution had been devised to protect the movement from 'impulsive' candidates. In order to ensure that everything was in good order in constituencies about to proceed to selection, the report indicated that the National Executive Committee had taken steps to ensure that it was represented at all selection conferences.

## Broken Pledges

The National Executive Committee had also been perturbed by the fact that several candidates who had signed the Constitution, had broken their pledges. Conference was assured that such inexcusable behaviour would not be tolerated. It was held that apart from the political gravity, that such an action was a breach of that personal behaviour which is also regarded as the foundation of public behaviour.

Despite these setbacks, 42 Labour Members of Parliament were elected—a net gain of two seats. The total votes cast had fallen to 906,881. Labour candidates polled 370,802 votes. It was felt that the Labour vote had declined mainly because of the old register and the fact that Labour had only 56 candidates in the field, as against 78 at the earlier General Election.

The 1910 report indicates that Labour had fought five by-elections during the previous year. Labour won Sheffield Attercliffe, with J. Poynter as candidate, and Mid-Derby with Mr. J. D. Hancock. Dr. Alfred Salter fought Bermondsey, but, unfortunately, was at the bottom of the poll in a three-cornered fight.

Party membership had again increased, and reached a total of 1,486,308, but the number of affiliated organisations had declined from 176 to 172. Seventeen unions had disaffiliated, partly, it was thought, owing to the Osborne Judgment, but there

had been 13 new affiliations.

The chief accession of strength during the year had been the affiliation of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain with a membership of 550,000. This affiliation meant more than pounds, shillings and pence. It meant that the Labour Party was now completely representative of the working-class movement in the country.

The National Agent presented his second annual report. His department had been increasingly active, partly because of the preparations for the General Election, and partly because the National Agent was being requested by more and more organisations for guidance on registration and electoral organisation.

#### Agency Service

Mr. Peters advised Conference that very shortly he hoped to submit a scheme to the National Executive Committee for securing an adequate agency service, and he again emphasised that if the Party was to continue its electoral successes it would become more and more dependent on trained agents.

The Parliamentary Labour Party had continued to be a splendid fighting force in the House of Commons, and in the country. Ramsay MacDonald had been forced by illness to retire from the secretaryship of the Parliamentary Party. The report expressed great appreciation of his services and there was unanimous regret that force of circumstances had compelled him to resign. His successor was James Parker, at that time Labour M.P. for Halifax.

The Party was far from satisfied with the Government's plans for dealing with the growing problem of unemployment. It moved an amendment to the King's Speech expressing regret that in view of the serious distress arising from lack of work the Government's proposed legislation was totally inadequate for dealing with the root of the problem.

At the beginning of the session it was hoped to introduce six bills, but was unfortunate in the ballot for the promotion of bills, and secured only one allotted day.

As was to be expected, it decided to

introduce the 'Unemployment of Workmen Bill'. John Hodge, M.P. for Gorton, opened the debate and Labour's bill was finally supported by 115 Members of Parliament: 228 Members voted against.

The Party supported the Government's Bill for establishing Labour Exchanges on a national scale, not because it considered such establishments to be the remedy for unemployment, but because it was felt that the Exchanges would establish the necessary machinery for providing reliable data upon which the Labour Party could press forward its case for action.

The Parliamentary Labour Party also took charge of the bill for dealing with the 'Sweated Industries'. Its action led to the appointment of a Select Committee to enquire into conditions of labour in trades in which 'homework' was prevalent.

The Party also moved an amendment to reduce the Foreign Office vote as a protest against the announcement that the Czar of Russia was to pay an official visit to this country. It was supported by 75 Members.

In his address to Conference, Keir Hardie drew attention to the influence of the presence of a Parliamentary Labour Party in the House of Commons. He pointed out that only 10 years earlier, when Labour had only two Members in the House, unemployment, old age pensioners, 'sweated' women, and starving children had no place in the thoughts of the country's legislators.

#### Social Reform

The presence of 40 Labour Members of Parliament in the House, and the growing influence of the Labour Party in the country, meant that no political party dare make an appeal to the electorate without at least paying lip service to the need for social reform.

He reminded Conference that in the early days of the Party, socialists and trade unionists had eyed each other with suspicion. In 1910 socialists and trade unionists alike, recognised that their points of difference almost disappeared when weighed against their points of agreement.

He prophesied that two sets of people would be doomed to bitter disappointment — those who hoped to see the ranks of the movement rent by internal discord, and those who hoped to see the Party bring about its own undoing by entering into some agreement, or understanding, with the Liberal Government.

# KEEP THE CANVASS UP-TO-DATE

A SYSTEM designed to ensure that, at the beginning of the next election, there's little *identification* canvassing left to do, must involve a good deal of canvassing outside election periods. But not such a terrifying lot of it.

There are only two situations when canvassing becomes really heavy: (1) When setting up the index, if you have to start from scratch, and (2) when canvassing is allowed to get behind. For instance, in a town like Reading, it takes only three or four years for half the electorate to become unidentified, if we don't keep to an annual schedule. And, if that happens, there's a job of 40,000 Greens to tackle.

Done a bit at a time, the canvassing is not only more effective, but a much less formidable job. Regularity is the key. The thing to do is to work to an annual time-table to cover the annual intake of electors, the municipal elections and a steady revision of the index.

In the average polling district, about 250 'new' electors appear every year on List B, published on November 28th. If we don't do something about it, there will be about 250 Greens from the date of the new register, February 5th. That's why the Canvass Calendar provides for a 'new electors' canvass in December and January.

## Two Ways

There are two ways of doing this canvass—on cards, or on the list. If cards are used, it's necessary to write Green cards to cover the new electors and put them in street covers. The canvasser enters the voting habit 'For', 'Against' or 'Doubtful' on the cards and makes any useful notes.

If the list is used, the list itself is marked 'F', 'A' or 'D'. But it's essential in this case for every canvasser to carry a pad for making additional notes, especially in the cases of the 'Fors'.

This canvass often brings to light

**THIS** is the third of a series of articles on the "Reading" electoral system. A complete record of identification involves regular canvassing and this article shows how it is done in Reading.

strong supporters who have moved in from elsewhere. Obviously it's a canvass in which the fullest notes ought to be made and the necessary action taken.

Needless to say, any Greens already in the card index are included in the 'new electors' canvass. They are left-overs from last year and we must take this opportunity to get them replaced with Whites, Blues and Buffs.

By February 15th, this canvass should be finished. The District Manager then brings his index into line with the new register by the process described previously.

When the District Manager receives List B, he will find the names of 'Y' electors crossed off. Canvassing 'Y's is a separate operation—a job for young members, which the Youth Section are asked to take over. Green cards are made out before the lists leave the central office and by February 15th a team of Youth Section members make it their business to visit the 'Y's and find out their political colour.

It will be something of a miracle if the Youth Section isn't strengthened in the process. Copious notes should be made on the cards and the Youth Section take their own action on these before handing the cards back to the Agent, who then sends them out to the various District Managers.

The canvass calendar includes in

October a 'back-log' canvass of Greens. It may be asked why this is in, since we're supposed to have got rid of the Greens earlier in the year.

The fact is that the October canvass shouldn't usually be necessary. But things can go wrong. Let's suppose that something or other prevents the full canvass of new (List B) electors in December and January. And then, there isn't a contest in the municipal elections and all the canvassers go off to work in another ward.

It's plain that there can be an accumulation of Greens for this or some other reason. The aim of every District Manager should always be to have no Greens whatever in those boxes and that's what the October canvass is for—to get rid of any remaining Greens before the new List B comes out.

#### Change Mind

By one means and another, it's highly desirable to ensure that our records of the voting habits of all electors are checked from time to time. People do change their minds about politics, although usually rather slowly and not very often. Moreover, our own work can't be perfect and it sometimes happens, through some accident, that we get, for example, a Labour supporter on a Blue card.

Whites and Buffs are all canvassed in the annual municipal election campaign and this provides the check on them. Blues we leave strictly alone during election periods, not wanting to do the Tories' job for them and waste precious time as well. So Blues don't get checked at election times and we have a special canvass for that purpose.

This isn't a heavy canvass in the average polling district, because we limit the aim to covering all Blues once every three years. That's a third of the Blues every year—or a sixth of the Blues in each of the two canvasses in the calendar.

If there are 1,500 Blues in the polling district, the District Manager chooses a number of books with 250

Blues in them and organises a canvass of these in February.

The canvasser puts the date on each card and nothing else if he finds them still Blue. But if they've become doubtful or changed to Labour views or always have been Labour, then he enters the date and the new state of affairs:

173B, Black Crescent, Mantown

24.2.57

O'Hara, Brenda

O'Hara, Osbert

*Have always been Labour*

103 Bottle Alley, Mantown

24.2.57

Jones, Aneurin

Jones, Maureen Mavis

*Now doubtful,  
cost of living*

When the books of cards come back the District Manager goes through the cards, substituting new Buff or White cards where necessary. In the case of the first example, for instance, he makes out a new white card for the two O'Haras. Second example, he crosses out 'Jones, Maureen Mavis' and makes a new Buff card for her, marking each card 'Also next card' or 'Also previous card'.

In July, the District Manager selects another 250 Blues (that's why the date of each canvass goes on the cards) and these are canvassed.

Despite all our efforts, there are always Labour non-voters in any election. It's worth paying some attention to these.

After each election, the District Manager prepares for a canvass of Labour non-voters in June, by going through the knocking-up lists. On the card of every 'promise' that isn't crossed off the list he puts a cross and indicates the election concerned—against the names concerned or in the top left-hand corner if all on a card failed to come out.

For example: XM 1957 means Didn't vote Municipal 1957. XP 1955 means 'Didn't vote Parliamentary 1955'.

### Only Non-Voters

Canvassers take the books, visiting only the non-voters and asking why they let us down—but not putting it so bluntly as that. The general 'I'm from the Labour Party' approach is the right one and usually it's a very short step from there to the topic of the recent elections and the supporter's failure to get to the poll.

Some very useful results come out of this canvass: (1) We sometimes find Labour supporters who should have had a Postal Vote (and we fix them up straight away). (2) We may discover a serious failure in our number-taking that we can put right. (3) Occasionally a Tory voter on a White card comes to light. (4) The likelihood of non-voters voting next time is increased by this visit.

When he gets the cards back from the canvassers, the District Manager goes through them, and makes any necessary adjustments.

Let's suppose we've reached the point of efficiency where we've politically identified every name entered on the register. This is fine. We know the electorate and in particular we know exactly which ones to be concerned about in an election. It would be very nice if we could stop there. And we could, if it weren't for abnormalities—particularly *removals*.

Electors can be as long as 16 months off the register at their present addresses, because a removal just after 10th October is not reflected in the

register till 15th February in the year after next. These 'abnormalities' pile up at such a rate that removals are a major factor in practically all marginal elections.

On any kind of canvassing, the District Manager sees to it that canvassers carry a supply of forms. When a canvasser comes across a removal case, he completes a form and hands it to the District Manager when he returns the cards. The District Manager will find he has certain action to take himself, depending on the circumstances.

There are two sorts of case: (1) A removal from one address to another in the same polling district. The District Manager transfers the information from the removal form to the index card and destroys the form. *The card stays in the index.* (2) A removal from an address in the polling district to one outside it (whether in Reading or not). The District Manager transfers the information from the form to the index card and sends the form to the Agent. If the removal is to a Reading address, the agent sends it to the other District Manager concerned, who notes the new occupiers on his card. If the removal is to an address outside the borough, the agent has some action to take in the case of Labour voters.

### Snowball Effect

Once this process is started, it's remarkable what a snowball effect it can have, as the examples on the next two pages illustrate.

These two forms may well have been completed by the same canvasser at the same time. He went to 127 Brightside Road on a Blue Card Canvass and found that the two electors registered at that address had moved to an address which, fortunately, the new occupiers could give. This information he put on the form (1) together with information from the canvass card. On receiving the form, the District Manager will (a) note the new address on the card, but *leave it in the index* and (b) send the form to the agent.

Form 2 concerns the new occu-

piers. The canvasser discovered from them their old address, full names and politics and filled in the form. Finding them strong supporters, he got them to join the Party and to agree to put up window bills. These facts he noted on the form which now goes to the District Manager with the other one. The District Manager will (a) note on the card for 127 Brightside Road, the names of the new occupiers and the rest of the information from the form and (b) send the form to the agent.

Form No. 3 arises because, when the District Manager for Park 2 received the form shown in illustration (1) he realised that the registered electors there might not be living there any more. The house was canvassed. Unfortunately, the canvasser couldn't discover the new address. The District Manager sends the form to the agent after noting that these two electors have left and the information about the new occupiers, leaving the card in the index.

On receiving Form 2 the District Manager of Bottle 1 realised that, having lost his three Labour electors from 3 Vinery Close, there must be some new occupiers. After a canvass, Form 4 is filled in. The District Manager notes this information and the new address of the three Labour voters on the card and sends the form to the agent.

(1)

These illustrations show the train of discoveries set up once attention begins to be paid to removals. And this without the addition of another organised canvass. There is, indeed, need for special removals canvass, and that explains why 'Removals' appears in the Canvass Calendar. *But it isn't an additional one.*

This special canvass is done only in areas of housing development, where families are moving in to new estates. For this, we can't use index-cards already made out, because the addresses aren't even on the register. The District Manager lists the roads occupied since the last canvass and gives each canvasser a supply of removal forms and P.V. cards.

When the forms are returned, the District Manager sends them in to the agent, after making his own record. This doesn't become a part of his index, but it will do so when the next new register comes out. This is why it isn't an additional canvass, but only part of the next 'New Electors' canvass done in advance.

It's done in advance because there are three great advantages to be gained: (1) Removals are easier to trace at the 'receiving' end, especially 'in bulk'. (2) It helps enormously in the job, always urgent in new housing areas, of getting the Party established there. (3) It starts off the train of removals at the other end.

#### REMOVAL NOTICE sent in by BOTTLE 2

Names	For, Against or Doubtful	Notes of Value (Labour voters only)
JONES, REGINALD	A	
JONES, THERESA M.	A	
Registered Address: 121 Brightside Road, Mantown		
New Address: 654 Damascus Road, Mantown		

(2)

**REMOVAL NOTICE sent in by BOTTLE 2**

Names	For, Against or Doubtful	Notes of Value
ELLISON, THOMAS C.	F	(Labour voters only)
ELLISON, WILFRED	F	Joined Party (ALL)
ELLISON, WINIFRED	F	Will put up window bills

Registered Address : *3 Vinery Close, Mantown*  
New Address : *127 Brightside Road, Mantown*

(3)

**REMOVAL NOTICE sent in by PARK 2**

Names	For, Against or Doubtful	Notes of Value
JAMES, NORMAN S.	F	(Labour voters only)
JAMES, VERA	F	

Registered Address : *54 Damascus Road, Mantown*  
New Address : *Not known—Left constituency*

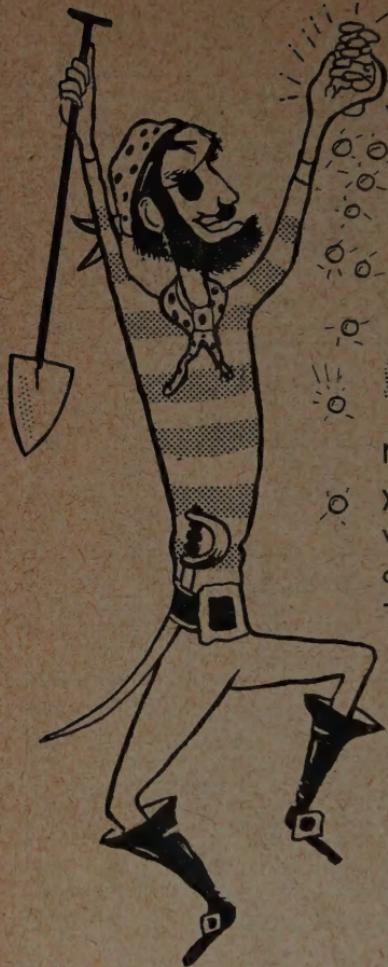
(4)

**REMOVAL NOTICE sent in by BOTTLE 1**

Names	For, Against or Doubtful	Notes of Value
FREEMAN, JOHN S.	A	(Labour voters only)
FREEMAN, ETHEL	A	

Registered Address : *54 Lambeth Walk, Mantown*  
New Address : *3 Vinery Close, Mantown*

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